

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5015
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 2822

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, YE
SUBJ: YARG GOVERNMENT: AN ASSESSMENT

REF: SANA 2617

SUMMARY: A PATTERN TO GHASHMI'S RULE IS EMERGING; IT PROMISES
SHORT-TERM SUCCESSES, LONG-TERM FAILURE. END SUMMARY.

1. INSTALLATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT HAS PRODUCED HEARTENING
BURST OF ACTIVITY IN MINISTRIES IDLED FOR OVER TWO MONTHS.
NEW MINISTERS ARE TRYING TO RE-START OLD PROJECTS, MOUNT NEW
ONES.

2. ESTIMATE IN SANA IS NEVERTHELESS THAT NEW GOVERNMENT IS
WEAK AND WON'T LAST LONG. MANY ARE SAYING IT WILL BE AROUND
FOR ONLY THREE MONTHS; THE OPTIMISTIC PREDICT SIX MONTHS.

3. MANY ARE SAYING THAT GHASHMI REALLY COULDN'T DUMP SOUTHERNER
ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI WHEN HE WAS ULSO DUMPING SOUTHERNER
ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM. NEVERTHELESS, MEN WHO NOW HAVE EAR
OF PRESIDENT ARE MEN WITH MILITARY BACKGROUND AND STRONG
TIES TO TRIBES. WE CAN'T IDENTIFY ALL THE MEMBERS OF
THIS RATHER SHADOWY GROUP, BUT THINK ITS LEADING MEMBERS
NOW, BESIDES CERTAIN SERVING OFFICERS, ARE AHMED AL-

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RUHUMI, ALI AL-AKHWA AND MUHAMMAD ABU LUHUM. TECHNOCRATS
IN GOVERNMENT ARE CURRENTLY DEBATING BUDGET FOR 1979 BUT
WE DOUBT THEY WILL BE ANY MATCH FOR STRONG-WILLED NORHTERN
SHAYKHLI FIGURES WHO SIT WITH PRESIDENT, TALK WITH HIM,
EVERY DAY.

4. WHAT THIS MEANS IS NOT JUST ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SOON.

IT MEANS THAT HAMDI POLICY OF STRENGTHENING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS GOING BY THE BOARDS. TRIBAL AND TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS NEVER WELCOMED DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT APPARATUS WHICH SOUTHERNERS USED TO TIP BALANCE OF POWER IN COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNIZATION. NOW NORTH IS DETERMINED TO RESTORE ROLE OF ITS LEADERS AS INTERMEDIARIES. THEY WANT TO BE ABLE CHANNEL MONEY AND PROJECT TO THEIR OWN CONSTITUENCIES, AND THEY WANT TO BE ABLE TO IGNORE GOVERNMENT WHEN THEIR INTERESTS SEEM TO DICTATE. SINAN ABU LUHUM IS ARCHETYPE OF THIS TYPE OF MAN. HE WAS ONE OF MANY SO-CALLED "CENTERS OF POWER." UNTIL HAMDI SACKED HIM, HE HAD BEEN ABLE AS GOVERNOR OF HODEIDA TO DIVERT CUSTOMS, ONLY REVENUE TO GOVERNMENT, TO WHATEVER PROJECT OR FRIEND HE WANTED. WE SEE NEW REGIME AS ONE IN WHICH "CENTERS OF POWER" WILL BE NUMEROUS AND POTENT, AT EXPENSE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

5. BY SAME TOKEN, DECISION-MAKING IN YAR IN FUTURE WILL HAVE DISTINCTLY MORE MILITARY THAN CIVILIAN CAST TO IT.

6. DECLINE IN ROLE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS ACCOMPANIED, IN GHASHMI'S CASE, WITH LACK OF PROGRAM. THIS GOVERNMENT CANNOT PROJECT ITSELF, INSPIRE INTEREST. IT STILL HASN'T MADE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT ABDALGNH ABD AL-ALIM AFFAIR. REASON IS THAT GHASHMI REPRESENTS SUCCESS OF INBRED SOCIAL GROUP, NOT SET OF IDEAS. FURTHERMORE, GHASHMI HAS NO RPT NO CHARISMA. HIS RULE IS VERY PERSONAL, IN SHAYKHLY
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TRADITION. HAMDI PARAPHERNALIA OF REFORM COMMITTEES, COOPERATIVES, POPULAR CONFERENCE AND EMIGRANT SOCIETIES NO LONGER COUNT. INSTEAD, TODAY, POLITICS CONSISTS OF MEETING THE PRESIDENT. MOST DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THESE MEETINGS IS THAT NO ONE COMES AWAY FROM GHASHMI EMPTY HANDED. VISITORS GET ORDERS FOR GOVERNMENT TO DO THIS OR THAT, BY-PASSING CABINET, AND THEY GET MONEY. THIS MISSION KNOWS OF DOZENS OF EXAMPLES OF MEN WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN CARS, HOUSES, LAND, TRIPS ABROAD, \$50,000 IN CASH. REPORTS OF PAY-OFFS TO KOUHALI AND ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM ARE ASTRONOMIC, RUNNING INTO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT'S SAUDI RATHER THAN YEMENI MONEY. LOYALTY SEEMS INCREASINGLY BASED ON SELF-INTEREST RATHER THAN A PROGRAM.

7. IT'S PERFECTLY POSSIBLE FOR THIS ALL TO WORK AS A FORMULA FOR GOVERNMENT IN YEMEN. FRIENDS OF EMBASSY LIKE ABD AL-KARIM AL-IRYANI WON'T PUT UP WITH IT. HE IS LEAVING COUNTRY "FOR TWO YEARS OR SO," SAYING HE REFUSES "TO BE PART OF GOVERNMENT LIKE THIS." HIS VIEWS ABOUT WEAKNESS OF NEW GOVERNMENT, THREAT FROM SOUTH, ARE IDENTICAL WITH THOSE OF ANOTHER GOOD EMBASSY FRIEND, AHMED ABDO SAID, WHO REPORTED

SEPTTEL (SANA 2753).

8. IT MAY ALSO BE PERIOD OF GROWING SAUDI ROLE HERE. THEY WANT SOVIETS OUT. THEY WANT YAR TOLERATION OF SAUDI SUBSIDIES TO BRIBES AND OFFICERS. THEY WANT LEFTISTS PURGED. THEY WANT OFFICIAL SANCTIONS FOR RELIGION, POWERS OF NOMINATION AND VETO OVER OFFICIALS AND PROGRAMS. IRYANI SAYS SAUDIS WANT "CLOSED SOCIETY IN YAR, LIKE SAUDI SOCIETY."

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9. WE'RE NOT SO PESSIMISTIC AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT RUN. GOVERNMENT WILL GROW WEAKER BUT YEMENIS CAN STILL DEFLECT MUCH OF SAUDI PRESSURE, ABSORB SOME OF IT, BALANCE THE REST. IN PROCESS THEY WILL EAT UP SAUDI RESOURCES. GOVERNMENT CAN ALSO PROBABLY SURVIVE SHIFT OF LEADERSHIP FROM SOUTHERN TO NORTHERN CADRES. GHASHMI CAN HOLD ON TO SOUTH; SOUTH HAS FEW GOOD CHOICES. YEMEN CAN ALSO TAKE CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT IN STRIDE. IT CAN ALSO SURVIVE LACK OF PROGRAM. DEVELOPMENT WILL PROCEED IN PRIVATE SECTOR, EVEN IF IT LAGS IN PUBLIC SECTOR; REMITTANCES WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT. WHAT SYSTEM COULDN'T HANDLE IN SHORT RUN IS OF COURSE DETERMINED MOVE BY PDRY TO RENEW SUBVERSION. AND IN LONG RUN -- SAY EIGHTEEN MONTHS -- FAILURES OF GHASHMI PATTERN WILL TURN MANY YEMENIS AGAINST HIM.

10. IF GHASHMI IS KILLED, OF COURSE, ALL BETS ARE OFF.
RANSOM

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